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ABSTRACT

Surveying Afro-American literature--mainly from the Harlem Renaissance to the present--and examining materials and resources usually at the elementary, secondary, and college levels, this course culminates in the development of an individual or group term project. These projects have generally consisted of the following types; a lesson plan for the specific grade level on which the student is focusing, an annotated bibliography of resource materials for use in teaching, a multi-media presentation, and a creative project designed by the student in consultation with the instructor. When possible, an additional and valuable facet of the course is the presence of a black scholar-critic who may both give an all-university lecture and visit the classroom, engaging in dialogue with the students. (JM)

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Black Literature for Prospective Teachers

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A371 Black Literature for Prospective Teachers, offering three credit hours, was initially designed as a materials and resources course for English Education and Social Studies Education majors. When a substantial number of Elementary Education and Multi-cultural/Urban Education students enrolled, we shifted the emphasis of the course slightly in order to accomodate the needs of those students.

As it was originally conceived, A371 attempted a double focus: half of the semester was devoted to a survey of Afro-American Literature--mainly from the Harlem Renaissance to the present; half to an examination of materials and resources generally at two, sometimes at three levels (elementary, seconiary, college), culminating in the development of an individual or group term project. This format has continued to be the most satisfactory, and each spring or summer the course is offered the students decide how they want to allot the time. Then I structure the syllabus. At no time have they made the decision to separate the reading and discussion of the literature--the survey section--from the examination of the materials and the term project. They seem to prefer chaos to what could be, as they see it, well ordered boredom.

"Black Literature for Prospective Teachers" is not a methods course per se. The idea is to present materials and to allow the widest range of imagination in the development of individual, creative projects. Students are, of course, expected to do some quite mundane things like reading assignments before they come to class and being prepared for discussion. They are also required to write brief reactions to the audio/visual materials

CS 201 428

which are presented during class time and to be systematic about the selection of term projects. These have tended to be individual rather than group projects--although that option is available--and have generally been of the following type:

> A lesson plan for the specific grade level the student will be teaching or would like to teach; it is adapted to a specific geographic and socio-economic area: e.g. urban (inner city), rural, suburban. A format for the plan is provided and discussed in class, but it is not a sophisticated, detailed format such as those used in the School of Education. The purpose of this project is to give the prospective teacher an opportunity to shape the new materials in Black Literature into a meaningful plan for future implementation.
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> And/or annotated bibliography of resource materials (with library guidance) to be prepared in a form suitable for use in a teaching situation. The format for the bibliography includes four sections: books for use in the classroom, books for teacher preparation, professional periodicals and journals, anthologies. During abbreviated summer sessions, students prepared one or the other of these; during the regular semester, the bibliography usually accompanied and complemented the lesson plan.
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> Multi-media presentation. This kind of project was attempted twice and each time should have had additional students involved in order to succeed. The first project had so many different apparatus going simultaneously that it blew the electrical system in one end of the building--an ambitious, yet commendable failure.
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> A creative project designed by the student in consultation with the instructor. Some have been film strip and cassette presentations with the student reading from a selected work (e.g. Langston Hughes' Alberta K poems) pre-recorded on cassette tape with accompanying film strip (or slide) illustrations. One especially well done presentation was assembled and performed by a graduate student in the Speech Department whose term project was the plan for a course in Black Communications which she would be teaching the following semester. In addition to presenting one day's work in that projected course, she gave a twenty-minute reading-performance from the speeches of Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth and Mary Church Terrell.

In more affluent times we were able to enrich the semester by the presence of Black scholar-critics who, in addition to giving an all-

university lecture, also visited the classroom, engaged in dialogue with the students and answered their most pressing questions. The first semester in which the course was offered--and those now seem like halcyon days--we had Darwin Turner, Charles T. Davis, Helen Johnson and Addison Gayle, Jr. I mention this facet of the learning experience because I feel that one of the things we, as whites, can and most assuredly must do is go to reliable Black critics for information and guidance in such matters as the selection of books. They have something we certainly do not: they have lived a black experience (not the black experience because obviously there are many) and, if for no other reason, have the authority to speak on the credibility of characters and situations, the implicit if not explicit prejudice which may escape us, condescension of all varieties and falsifications of the realities of black life in America. We are not the authorities, but we can learn to refine our senses and we can help our students to learn. We can, that is, if we are willing to admit our limitations.

N.B. Paper was supplemented with slides (sample of a presentation given in the classroom), syllabi, library guides, formats for lesson plan and bibliography, reading and recorded tape lists.